

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, EAID, IBRD, IDB, PA
SUBJ: WELL-INFORMED GOP SOURCE SEES PROSPECTS FOR IAHRC VISIT FADING

REF: (A) ASUNCION 902 (B) 77 STATE 4935

1. ENG. ENZO DEBERNARDI, DIRECTOR OF LOCAL ELECTRIC COMPANY ANDE
AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ITAIPU BINATIONAL, INTRODUCED THE SUBJECT
OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN DISCUSSION WITH THE COMMERCIAL ATTACHE ON MARCH 7.
HE SAID THAT HE, PERSONALLY, WAS EXTREMELY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE
POSSIBILITIES OF ARRANGING AN IAHRC VISIT. DEBERNARDI REPEATED
COMMENTS HE HAD MADE EARLIER (REF B) NOTING THAT A VISIT BY THE
COMMISSION WOULD BE CONSIDERED A HUMILIATION BY THE PRESIDENT. HE
ALSO SAID THAT BOTH ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL WERE STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THE
VISIT AND THAT PARAGUAY COULD NOT AFFORD TO ANTAGONIZE BOTH OF ITS
POWERFUL NEIGHBORS AT THE SAME TIME. DEBERNARDI ADVISED THAT REAL
PROGRESS MIGHT BE MADE IN CHANGING THE POLITICAL SYSTEM HERE IN
PARAGUAY IF THE USG COULD IGNORE THE PROPOSED VISIT BY THE IAHRC AND
INSTEAD PRESENT A LIST OF NEEDED REFORMS TO THE GOVERNMENT, INCLUDIN
G
SUCH ITEMS AS RELEASE OF PRISONERS AND A REFORM OF THE
JUDICIAL SYSTEM.

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2. AFTER A DISCUSSION OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF U.S. LAW,
DEBERNARDI SUGGESTED THAT A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES BY A
GROUP OF COLORADO PARTY SENATORS MIGHT BE USEFUL IN EXPLAINING
PARAGUAYAN REALITIES TO THE U.S. CONGRESS. THIS IDEA WAS
DISCOURAGED.

3. WHEN ASKED WHAT HE PROPOSED TO DO ABOUT THE PENDING REQUEST

TO IDB FOR A \$32.8 MILLION LOAN TO EXPAND THE ELECTRICAL TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM, DEBERNARDI SAID HE PLANNED TO WAIT TILL THE END OF APRIL IN THE HOPE THAT SOMETHING MIGHT BRAK ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS FRONT. IF NOTHING HAPPENED, HE PLANNED TO GO TO COMMERCIAL BANKS FOR FINANCING, BUT IN VIEW OF THE HIGHER COSTS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO CUT BACK THE PROJECT SHARPLY. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD DECIDED NOT TO APPROACH THE IDB FOR A REGULAR LOAN SINCE THE UNITED STATES WOULD STILL OPPOSE THE LOAN. ALTHOUGH HE WAS AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THE LOAN COULD BE PASSED OVER A NEGATIVE VOTE FROM THE U.S., HE BELIEVED THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN OPEN "NO" VOTE FROM THE U.S. WOULD BE ALMOST AS BAD AS A VETO.

4. COMMENT: DEBERNARDI IS ONE OF THE KEY ADVISERS TO THE PRESIDENT IN THE CURRENT DEBATE OVER WHETHER TO PERMIT THE IAHRV VISIT TO TAKE PLACE. IN ADDITION, BECAUSE OF HIS POSITION IN ITAIPU AND BECAUSE HE FREQUENTLY ACCOMPANIES THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON VISITS TO BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA, DEBERNARDI IS IN AN EXCELLENT POSITION TO OBSERVE THE STRENGTH OF PRESSURES FROM THESE TWO COUNTRIES. HIS PESSIMISM ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AN IAHRV VISIT HAS DEFINITELY HARDENED SINCE THE CONVERSATIONS HELD IN DECEMBER. EMBASSY BELIEVES THIS IS HIS PERSONAL VIEW ON HOW HE SEES THE SITUATION DEVELOPING, AND NEITHER A PLOY OR A DELIBERATE SIGNAL TO THE EMBASSY.
BRIGGS

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